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LETTER

WRITTEN IN 1862

BY

FRANCIS DUNBAR RUGGLES,

*A Member of the Washington Artillery of New Orleans,*

TO HIS FATHER IN BOSTON.



MISS EMMELINE RUGGLES of Wakefield, Massachusetts, is a member of Boston Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy (her sponsors being Major-General William J. Behan, former Mayor of New Orleans, and Colonel Henry H. Baker of that city) by right of the services of her uncle (her father's only brother):

FRANCIS DUNBAR RUGGLES, corporal First Company Washington Artillery of New Orleans, C. S. A. He marched from New Orleans with his battalion, May 27, 1861, to Virginia. He was killed in battle, Fredericksburg, Virginia, Dec. 13, 1862. Distinguished for bravery, see "In Camp and Battle with the Washington Artillery" by its colonel, the late Wm. Miller Owen, pages 9, 17, 28, 134, 188, 189, 190, 194, 437, 467; also the "Washington Artillery Souvenir," published by the Battalion. His name is upon the "Washington Artillery Monument" in Metairie Cemetery, New Orleans, though he is buried in Lot No. 12, Section L, in the old part of Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia, where a suitable monument marks his grave. Col. Owen in his book speaks of one of his first acts of bravery in these words (p. 135) "The 'Victoria' and the 'Cross of the Legion of Honor' have been pinned to a soldier's breast for acts of lesser heroism." Col. Henry H. Baker's "Battle of Fredericksburg," after describing his death upon the field, gave this brief account of his life (p. 52): "Corporal Francis Dunbar Ruggles was a handsome Boston boy, a general favorite with the men, for he was as brave as he was gentle and kind. He came of Revolutionary stock, for his four great-grandfathers were in the army of Washington. President Lyon G. Tyler, of Willliam and Mary College, once said of him, 'Although George Ruggles was among the founders of Virginia, none of his race ever came to Virginia until his descendant, Francis Dunbar Ruggles, marched to her defense in arms and shed his blood upon her soil, an event appropriately and almost poetically suggestive of the early connection.'"





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Letter written in 1862 by FRANCIS DUNBAR RUGGLES, a member of the First Company of the Washington Artillery of New Orleans C. S. A., to his father in Boston. Read before Boston Chapter, U. D. C., April 10, 1917.

This letter is dated fifty-two days before his death at the battle of Fredericksburg.

“On the Army of the Potomac  
Wednesday, Oct, 22, 1862.

To Henry B. Ruggles, Esq., of Lawrence Wilde & Co.,  
Boston, Mass.

Dear Father: I avail myself to-day of an opportunity which presents itself of communicating with you simply for the purpose of informing you of my good condition and whereabouts, and thereby relieving you of that anxiety which a father would naturally feel when separated from his son by the irreparable breach which to-day divides your country from mine—not with any intention of expatiating upon the merits and causes which have produced this separation.

Alas! who would have thought ten years ago that this once glorious country could have been reduced to its present condition; who would have for a moment supposed that any subject of discussion, however momentous, could have been produced to the public mind, that would cause men to take up arms—father against son, and brother against brother, thereby forever severing the ties, not only of friendship, but of blood? Truly the people of the North are bereft of reason, or a portion of them at least. Of course, I do not know anything of your sentiments (and even if I did, should not allow it to interfere with my conduct or feelings toward you, whom I shall ever honor and respect as my parent, regardless of all National difficulties).

Many, doubtless, with you, are sincere in their belief of the righteousness of their cause—but with us, we are a UNIT in the fixed conviction that ours is a just and holy cause; and ‘Thrice armed is he whose cause is just.’ But in saying this, perhaps I am overstepping the prescribed limits of my letter, so let me direct my thoughts to other subjects.

*Gen Res Hist 7 Oct 60 Goodspeed*





Many opportunities have offered of communicating with you before now, but through returned and paroled prisoners—and I have felt, naturally, a delicacy in going so far, as thus to violate the rules of war. I presume you have been aware of my enlisting in the army, for I wrote you just before the commencement of hostilities, that in the event of its becoming necessary, I should not hesitate to take up arms in the defense of our rights.

I volunteered in New Orleans on the 27th day of May, 1861, and left immediately for the seat of war in Virginia, with the BATTALION OF WASHINGTON ARTILLERY, commanded by Major J. B. Walton, now a colonel and soon will be promoted to brigadier-general. The battalion is composed of four companies in Virginia—the first commanded by Capt. C. W. Squires, of which I am a member; the fifth company is in Kentucky, under Bragg; the sixth company remained in New Orleans for home protection, and was disbanded upon the disgraceful surrender of that beautiful city to its present inhuman and beastly ruler, Butler. I have been in ten different engagements, including the battles of Bull Run, Manassas, Richmond, Rappahannock Station, Sudley or Manassas second, and Sharpsburg, in all of which the protecting hand of an Almighty God has been stretched over me and preserved me with but a single scratch from the deadly missiles of an invading, treacherous and relentless foe. While my companions have fallen on either side of me, I have been protected, thanks to an over-ruling Providence, to whose wisdom and law I submit myself in all future efforts to defend our soil and maintain our independence.

I am mustered in 'for the war' be it long or short, and although several opportunities offer to become relieved of active military duties, and to change my position from the field, I refuse them all and will continue so to do. Having enlisted for the war, I am determined to fight it out, so long as the present principles are maintained. My heart is in this holy cause—in this grand struggle for independence—and when it shall have been achieved, none will retire to the peace and quiet of home with a more firm conviction





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of having done his whole duty to his God, his country, his neighbor and himself than I; and I look forward to a lifetime of happiness when the independence of the Southern Confederacy shall be achieved. And, God grant that the day is not far distant, is my daily prayer!

I am enjoying perfect health, and only trust this may find you the same. We are sumptuously fed and comfortably clothed—notwithstanding reports in Northern journals to the contrary. I regret being obliged to go through a long, tedious and inactive winter, and am in hopes McClellan may be induced to advance upon us—think we are quite well prepared for him!

I have sought in vain among captured prisoners for some person whom I knew, or had heard of in the North—would like very much to converse with some one.

I receive letters regularly from New Orleans. At last accounts G. W. D. and F. D. and families were quite well—of course much depressed mentally. Suppose they will be compelled to take the oath of allegiance to the United States, but it will only be forced upon them.

To any of my former friends and acquaintances who may inquire after me, please remember me as a ‘rebel.’

Trusting and praying that God may open the eyes of the blind fanatics of the North to a true view of their condition and intentions; that their ears may be opened to the popular voice of the South, which only asks of them their right to be let alone and allowed to depart from a Union, which is no longer a Union, in peace, I remain, your son,

Francis Dunbar Ruggles.

P. S. Please mail the enclosed letter to its address. Send word to Asaph Dunbar that all are well in No. 11.”

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NOTE. Francis Dunbar Ruggles is represented in Boston Chapter U. D. C. by his niece, Miss Emmeline Ruggles of Wakefield, Massachusetts.



LINEAGE.



